

PETITION

OF

A NUMBER OF THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI,

PRAYING

A donation of land to settlers in the Oregon Territory.

JANUARY 6, 1840.

Referred to the Select Committee on the Oregon Territory, and ordered to be printed.

To the Hon. the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled :

The undersigned, citizens of the State of Missouri,

BEG LEAVE TO REPRESENT :

That many of us entertain a desire to emigrate to the Territory of Oregon, provided the obstacles which now render such removal inexpedient, should be removed by the legislation of Congress on the subject, to ask which, is the subject matter of this petition. The difficulties attendant on a removal thither, under any circumstances of encouragement by the Government, are many and great—to exile ourselves from the land of our nativity, around which so many endearing recollections cluster, to encounter the toil and fatigue of traversing the long and wearisome distance, the difficulties and privations of making the pilgrimage through a barren wilderness, the climbing the mountain's brow, and stemming the current of mighty rivers, would, under the most favorable circumstances of encouragement by the Government, stamp the undertaking as one of Herculean labor, which nothing but the certain prospect of greatly bettering our condition could at all justify. But without such encouragement, and the protection of the strong arm of the Government against Indian treachery and British insolence and domination, every motive of prudence and self-preservation unite to forbid the enterprise. It is not *our* province to decide that the interest of the Government itself, as well as its generosity, would second our petition, with reasons irresistible ; *that* is a consideration for the *statesman*, instead of the humble petitioner. We may, however, we hope without the imputation of arrogance, be allowed to venture the opinion, that in asking the boon of a grant of land in Oregon, to each person who will move there within a given time, we ask nothing which it would be the interest of the Government to withhold. The importance of the mouth of the Columbia to the United States, in a political point of view, is too apparent to be overlooked by the most superficial observer ; the facilities it affords to other nations of access to the interior, and of communication with the various tribes of western Indians, which in a time of war, would doubtless be used

to incite those tribes to acts of hostility against our frontier citizens, render the occupancy of it by our own citizens a paramount object, and its speedy occupancy is rendered necessary by the circumstance that every year the subjects of another government are increasing their strength there, and monopolizing a lucrative trade, the exclusive benefits of which ought to be secured to our own citizens. In a commercial point of view, the country is no less important. Many of the articles of general and daily consumption throughout the whole extent of the Union, will, when the Oregon is settled, be introduced through that channel to supply the general demand, at prices greatly reduced from those at which they are at present supplied, so that in every light in which the settlement of that country is viewed, whether as interposing a barrier to the encroachments of foreign and hostile nations, or as the means of reducing the aggregate of national expense, and augmenting national wealth, it seems to us it is a matter in which the nation at large has a deep and abiding interest. Besides all this, the settlement of that country will render accommodations on the intermediate route necessary for the comfort and convenience of movers, and of persons going to Oregon and returning to the States, and would facilitate the settlement of the vast and extensive regions of the Missouri Territory, and impart a value to the government lands in that quarter, which they otherwise will never possess. Without the encouragement of considerable grants of land, we believe the country will not settle, at least to any available extent, for a long time to come. It will at once be obvious that the extent of the grant ought to be proportionate to the great difficulties of moving, and the dangers to which settlers will be exposed; the expenses attending a removal would necessarily be great, and it would take a considerable quantity of land even to reimburse them. It is the object of men ordinarily in moving, to acquire homes for themselves and children; but small quantities of land would not be sufficient to settle large families of children moving there, as well as those born subsequent to such removal. Giving our citizens an interest in the country would be the best, as well as the cheapest, mode of its defence, for, from the detached and distant situation of Oregon from the populous parts of the country, the main dependance of the Government for its defence must be on citizen soldiers, residents of the country, impelled by every motive of interest as well as of patriotism, to protect the national interest, while defending their own. As a measure no less of justice than of policy, the extinction of the Indian claim to the land is a necessary prerequisite. With these observations, we close our petition by praying your honorable body for the speedy passage of a law granting lands to such persons as will become citizens of Oregon within a limited time, to be surveyed to them on their arrival there, in separate tracts, or in a connected body, as they may choose to select it, as well as such protection by the Government as will be sufficient to ensure their present safety, with the enjoyment of social order guarantied to them by the laws of the United States extended over that Territory. But should the relations of our Government with other nations be such as to render any definite action on the subject inexpedient at this time, in that case we pray that you may indicate, by resolution or otherwise, what the policy of the Government will be with regard to that country, and that you so far pledge the faith of the Government to give such grants, as soon as the nature of those relations are changed, as to justify us in making the contemplated removal, and we will, as in duty bound, &c.

John S. Johnson
John P. Rutter
Henry Willis
Stanton Buckner
Henry S. Millan
Horace Brown
W. P. Richardson
Charles Lake
Thomas Cobbs
John Lydick
Caly Forman
Samuel M. Woods
John McKee
David O. Glascock
Bartlet Searcy
John W. Bowen
J. G. Forqueran
Isaac Turner
Geo. A. B. Mahan
Thos. S. Anderson
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Marshall Kelley
J. Quinn Thornton
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A. B. Hawkins
Mark Hawkins
R. G. Fresh
William Pollard
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William McMullin
Andrew Butler
Rufus F. Bartlett
Benjamin Harman
W. H. Robnett
Gustavus Bowles
Jeremiah Taylor
Vincent Cordu
Wm. Shufts
Innskeep Foreman
M. M. Johnson
John Lean
Richard Walker
David Mayer
William Butler
C. B. Dingle
A. T. Buckner
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William Brownell
J. I. Campbell
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Josiah Elliott

J. Campbell
Jordan J. Montgomery
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John Shackelford
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Richard Drain
N. Werneck
J. P. Shropeher
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John Fry
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Allen Dodd
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Bartley Cazell
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Hawkins Smith
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